THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Since no final view has been taken, question of giving details thereof or time-frame does not arise.

Research contracts

2675. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry awards research contracts to consultants, NGOs, academic and research organizations, etc.;

(b) if so, the list of the research contracts with the names of the organizations who were awarded the research contracts in the last three years and its progress;

(c) whether the research contracts are illustrated on the website of his Ministry;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor;

(e) the details of internal process in deciding the topics of these research contracts;

(f) whether the research contracts were awarded through a competitive bidding process;

(g) if so, the criteria adopted for the competitive bidding process; and

(h) if not, the sanctity of the award process?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) No, Sir. The Ministry does not award any research contract to consultants, NGOs, academic and research organizations. However, the Ministry promotes various research activities by providing grant-in-aid to various institutions/ organizations which *inter-alia* include colleages, universities, academic and research organizations, non-governmental organizations etc., for carrying out specific research projects in identified thrust areas of research, under its various programmes.

(b) to (h) Do not arise.

Forest cover area in India

2676. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the "Open Forest" is increasing and "dense forest cover" has been decreasing in the country, particularly in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, details of statistics of past ten years about open forest cover and dense forest cover in the country, State-wise; and

(c) the details of steps taken or proposed to be taken to increase the dense forest cover percentage in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) No, Sir. As per remote sensing based biennial assessments made by Forest Survey of India presented in tables given in Annexure 1 & 2, the open forest and dense forest cover for the country have remained between 7.95% to 8.82% and 11.32% to 11.78% respectively of total geographic area, between 1997 and 2005.